Strategic Planning Branch **REPORT**

An Approach to Identifying Revitalizing Neighbourhoods in Edmonton

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AN APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING REVITALIZING NEIGHBOURHOODS IN EDMONTON

BY

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Important Note: This research paper was prepared by the Forecasting and Policy Development Group, Strategic Planning Branch, Planning and Development Department. The paper documents research results as part of an ongoing policy analysis activity. Neither the methods nor the results have been endorsed by the City of Edmonton.

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AN APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING REVITALIZING NEIGHBOURHOODS IN EDMONTON

1. Purpose

This report examines inner city revitalization in Edmonton as a continuation of the work undertaken for the General Municipal Plan (GMP) background study (Managing Urban Change in Edmonton, November 1987). The background study and the draft General Municipal Plan (June, 1988) arising from it, recognized the importance of concentrating civic attention on the improvement of inner city neighbourhoods.

Objective 1.B of the draft GMP proposes civic action to "renew, maintain or revitalize, as appropriate, the inner city communities". The achievement of this objective requires the identification of inner city neighbourhoods where revitalization is currently under way or where it might be expected (or encouraged) to occur in the near future.

The purpose of this report is the initial identification of revitalizing neighbourhoods in the inner city. The report answers three questions:

(1) What is the extent of revitalization in Edmonton's inner city?

(2) In which neighbourhoods is revitalization occurring?

(3) What do the findings suggest about the planning actions likely to be most effective in facilitating the revitalization of Edmonton's inner city?

The answers to these questions will help in the preparation of appropriate policies to continue the revitalization of inner city communities.

2. Approach to Identification of Neighbourhoods

Selection of Indicators

The revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods is characterized not only be physical change such as the rehabilitation of the housing stock but also by demographic and social change. To identify areas where revitalization is occurring, it is therefore necessary to make use of several indicators and to ensure that these indicators will reveal the different types of changes that are likely to occur in revitalizing neighbourhoods. To this end five indicators of revitalization were selected for use in this analysis.[1] The five indicators are defined as follows:

- **Population Change** is the change in total population from 1981 to 1986.
- **Home Ownership** is the change in the number of home owners from 1981 to 1986.
- **Pre-school Children**[2] is the change in the number of children (0-4 years) from 1981 to 1986.
- **Housing Renovations** are the percentage of single family dwellings that were renovated from 1981 to 1986, where the renovations increased the structural value of the dwelling by at least $1,000 ($1986).[3]
- **Social Status Change** Social status as defined by Ley (1988) is an index composed of two measures: (i) the percentage of the population with university education; and (ii) the percentage of the population employed in professional, managerial, technical and administrative occupations. Social status change is defined as the difference between the value of the social status index in 1971 and the value of the index in 1981.

The data on the five indicators were obtained from several sources. Data for population change, home ownership and pre-school children were available from the 1981 and 1986 federal censuses.

Data on housing renovations were made available from a study that was completed for a Master's thesis in progress (Woodman, 1989; Smith and Woodman, 1989) This study examined housing renovations completed in Edmonton's older neighbourhoods between 1971 and 1986. The data are available for a number of the more centrally located inner city census tracts with the exception of those areas where the federally sponsored Neighbourhood Improvement (NIP) and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance programs (RRAP) were applied.

Information on social status changes was obtained from a study of changing social status in Edmonton's inner city between 1971 to 1981 (Ley, 1988). Data are available for a number of inner city census tracts.

Method Used to Identify Revitalizing Neighbourhoods

To use the five indicators to identify revitalizing neighbourhoods it was necessary to define a selection criterion for each indicator. The inner city census tracts[4] were selected initially as 'potential' revitalizing areas on the basis of the selection criteria developed for individual indicators. Census tracts that were selected for several of the five indicators were then identified as areas where revitalization is occurring.

The selection criteria and process used to make the initial selection of census tracts were as follows:

- For the home ownership, population change, and pre-school children indicators, a census tract was selected if there was an increase in the indicator from 1981 to 1986. The magnitude of the increase was not considered at this time because, in general, all three indicators showed decline in the inner city throughout the 1970's. Even a small increase in the indicators may indicate that the downward trend has halted.

- For housing renovations, a census tract was selected if 5% or more of the single family dwellings had been renovated from 1981 to 1986. The 5% cut-off point is low reflecting the limited extent of housing renovations in Edmonton's older neighbourhoods. Smith and Woodman (1988) found that only 11.4% of the single family dwellings in their study area had been renovated from 1971 to 1986.

- For social status change, a census tract was selected if the increase in social status from 1971 to 1981 was in the 5.7% to 11.3% range. This range was obtained by combining the ranges of the two highest quintiles used in Ley's study.

Census Tracts Selected for Single Indicators

For each of the five indicators, several census tracts were selected as 'potential' revitalizing areas based on the selection criteria developed. Figures 1 to 5 show the location of the tracts selected for each indicator. The results of the selection are described below, and wherever possible, a metropolitan area and inner city comparison of the average change in each indicator is presented.

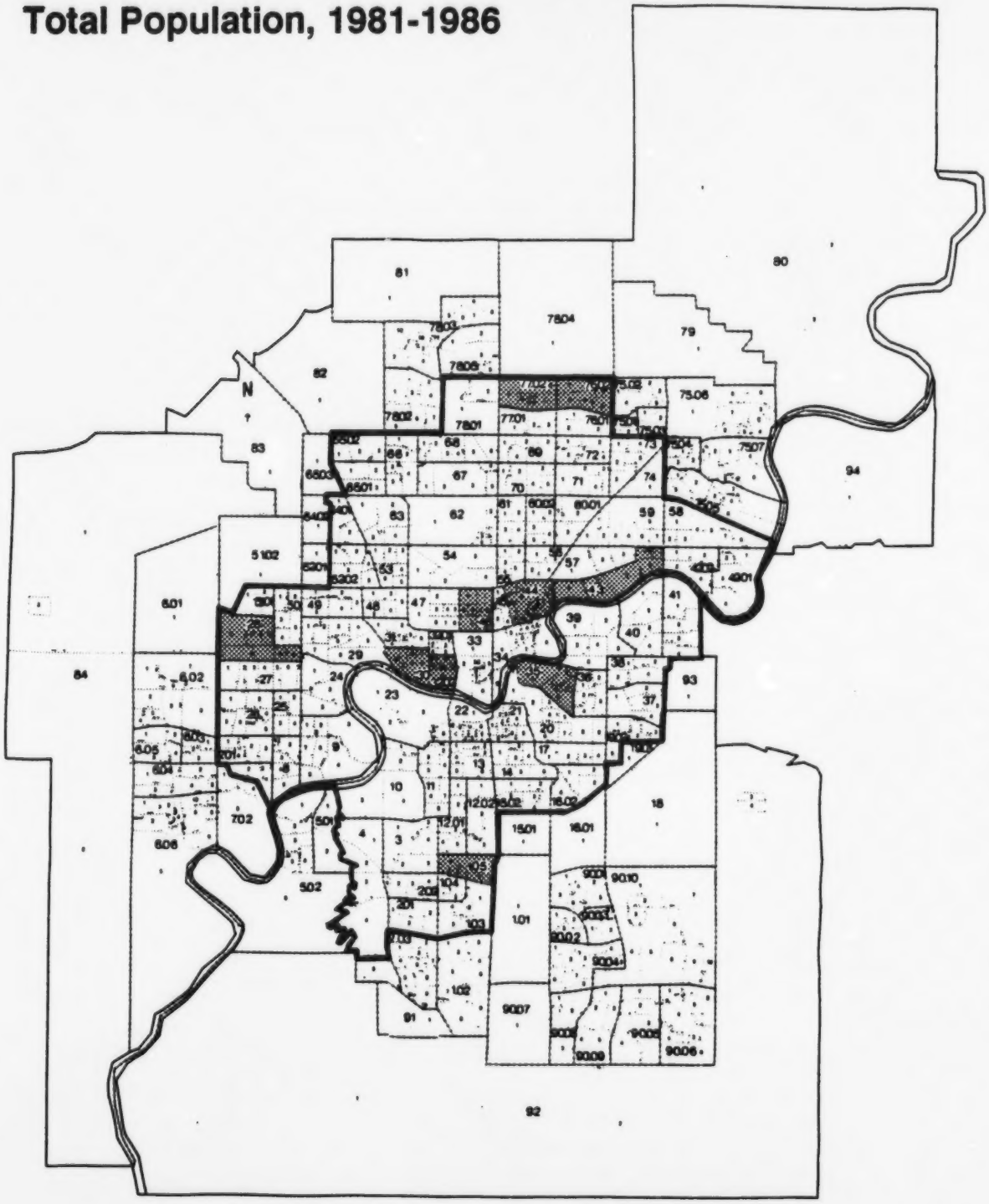
- **Population Change (Figure 1)**

  From 1981 to 1986, the total population in the inner city declined by 4.8% (17,800) while the population in the Edmonton metropolitan area increased by 6.0% (44,600) over the same period.

  Within the inner city, the total population increased in only 10 census tracts. The highest percentage increase in population

FIGURE 1

Inner City Census Tracts with an Increase in Total Population, 1981-1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 1981, 1986 Census.

(18.6%) occurred in a census tract located in the Oliver neighbourhood.

- **Home Ownership (Figure 2)**

From 1981 to 1986 the number of home owners in the inner city increased by 1.7% (1,020). In the metropolitan area home ownership increased by 26.2% (33,600).

The number of home owners increased in a total of 18 inner city census tracts between 1981 to 1986. The highest percentage increase (47.5%) occurred in the Oliver/Westmount area where there were 145 more homeowners in 1986 than there were in 1981.

The highest absolute increase in home owners (290) occurred in a relatively younger census tract located in north Edmonton and was a result of new development on previously vacant land.

- **Pre-School Children (Figure 3)**

From 1981 to 1986 the number of pre-school children increased by 7.7% (1,500) in the inner city. The number of pre-school children increased by 29.3% (15,100) in the metropolitan area.

The number of pre-school children increased in 46 of the 84 inner city census tracts. The highest percentage increase (124%) occurred in a North Glenora census tract where there was an absolute gain of 155 pre-school children. The highest absolute gain (265) occurred in Evansdale, one of the younger inner city neighbourhoods.

- **Housing Renovations (Figure 4)**

Data on housing renovations were available for only 22 inner city census tracts. Of these, five tracts were selected using the criterion that 5% or more of the single family dwellings were renovated between 1981 to 1986.

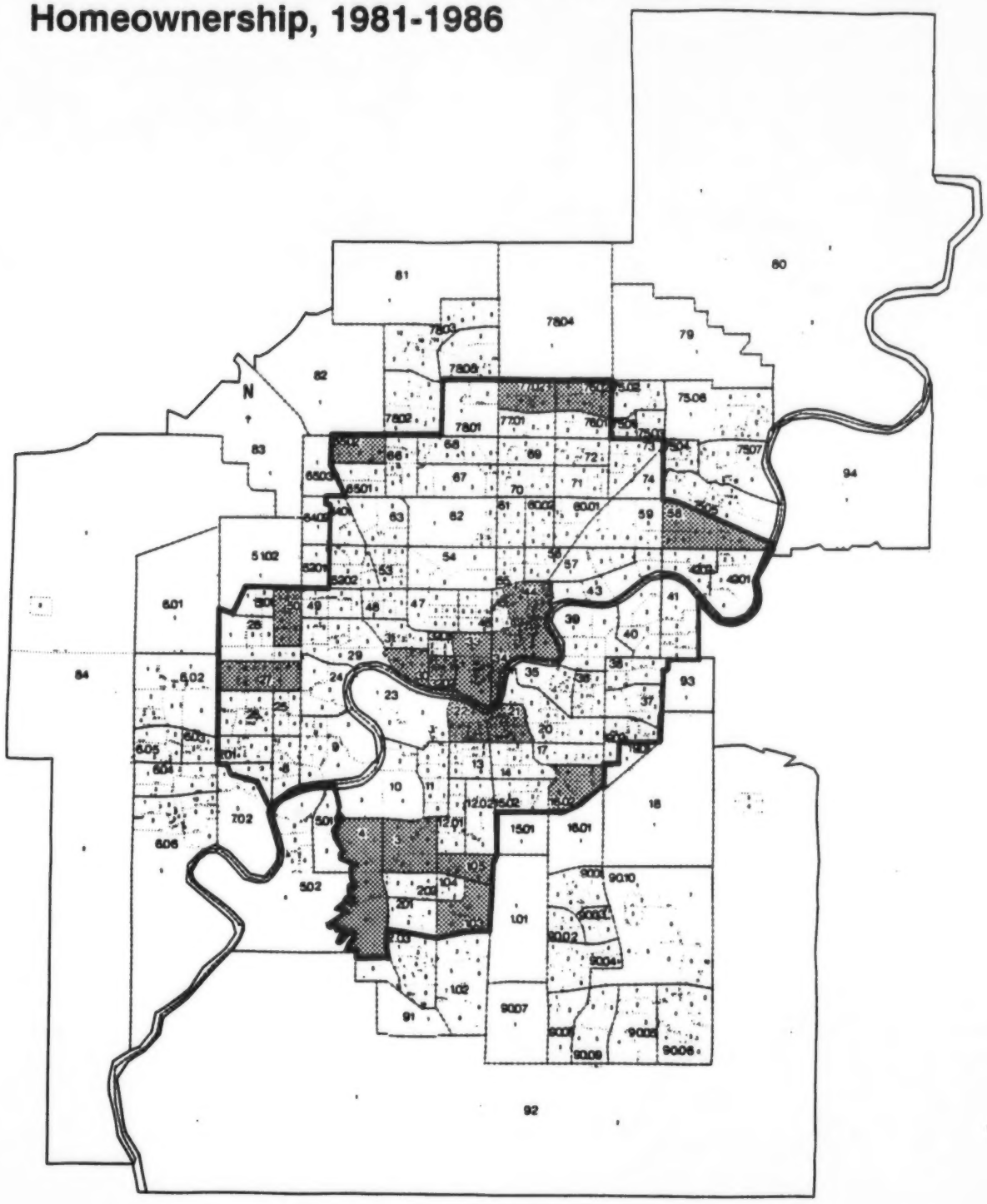
The highest percentage of dwellings renovated (7.9%) occurred in the southern part of Westmount where 35 houses were renovated. The highest absolute number of housing renovations (98) were completed in the Glenora area where 6.4% of the single family dwellings were renovated.

- **Social Status (Figure 5)**

Information on social status change was available for 18 census tracts. Seven census tracts were selected as 'potential' revitalizing areas according to the criterion that there was to have been an increase in social status ranging from 5.7% to 11.3% between 1971 and 1981. An increase in social status in 10.0% to 11.3% range occurred in three of the seven census

FIGURE 2

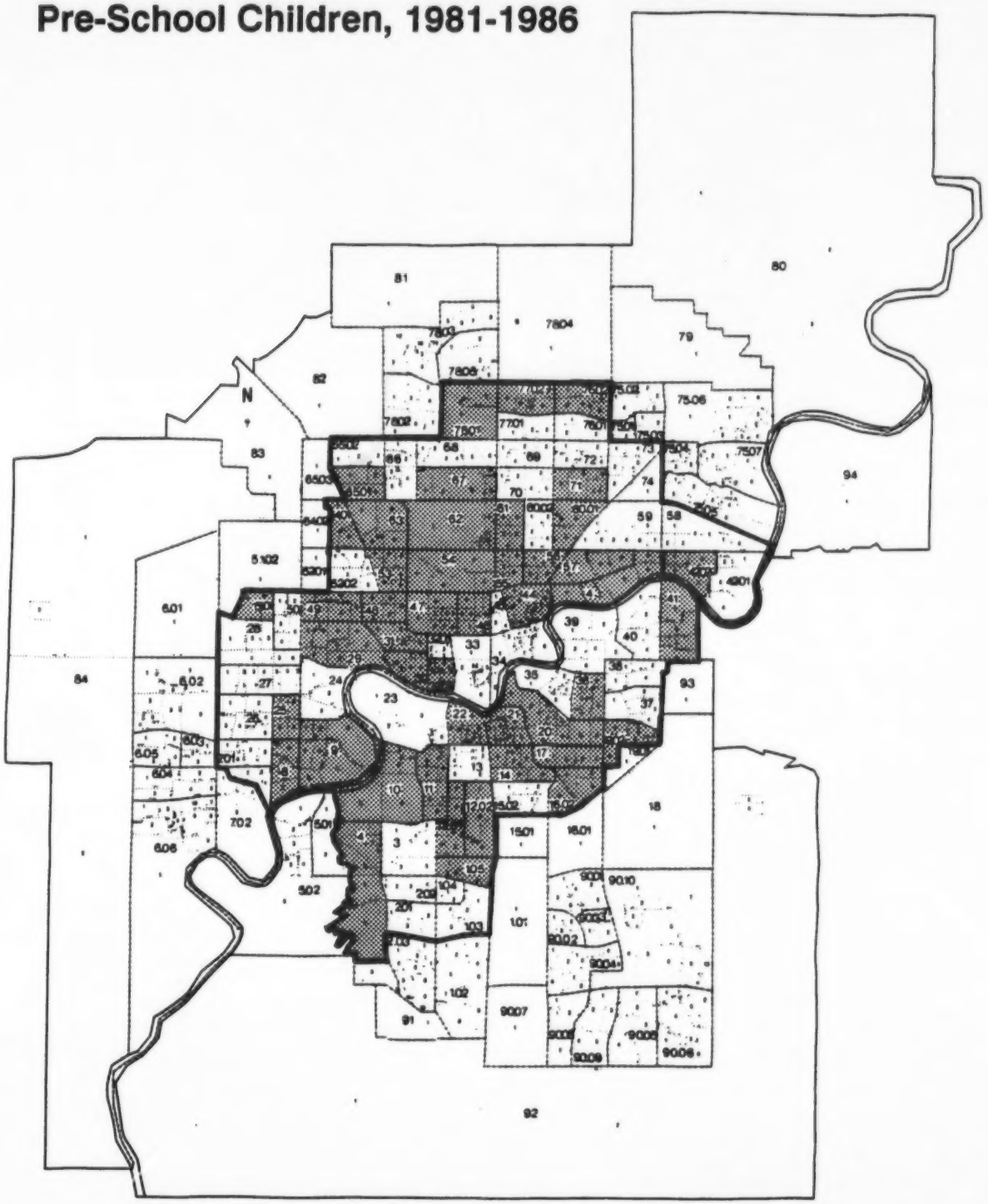
Inner City Census Tracts with an Increase in Homeownership, 1981-1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 1981, 1986 Census.

FIGURE 3

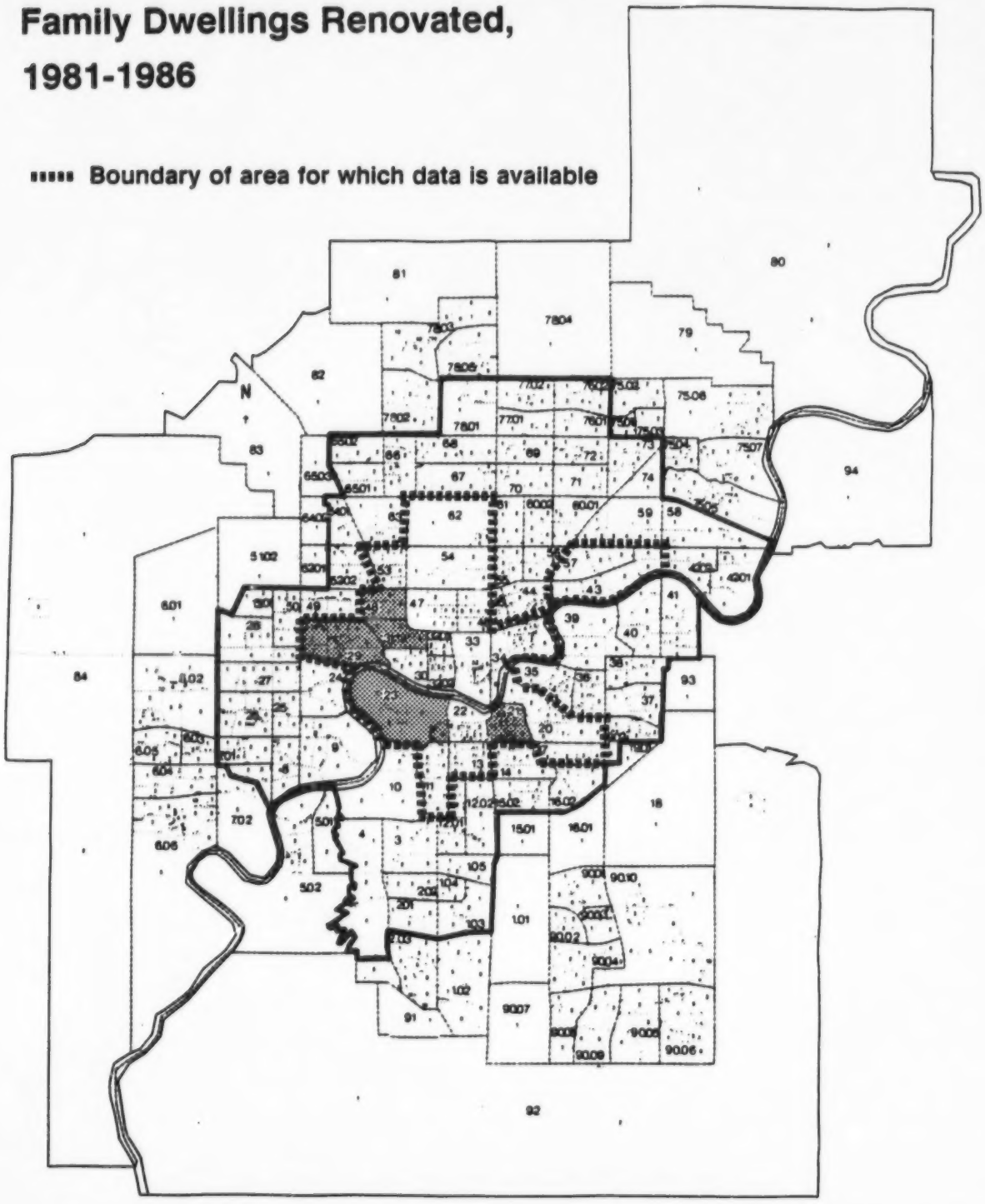
Inner City Census Tracts with an Increase in Pre-School Children, 1981-1986



Source: Statistics Canada, 1981, 1986 Census.

FIGURE 4

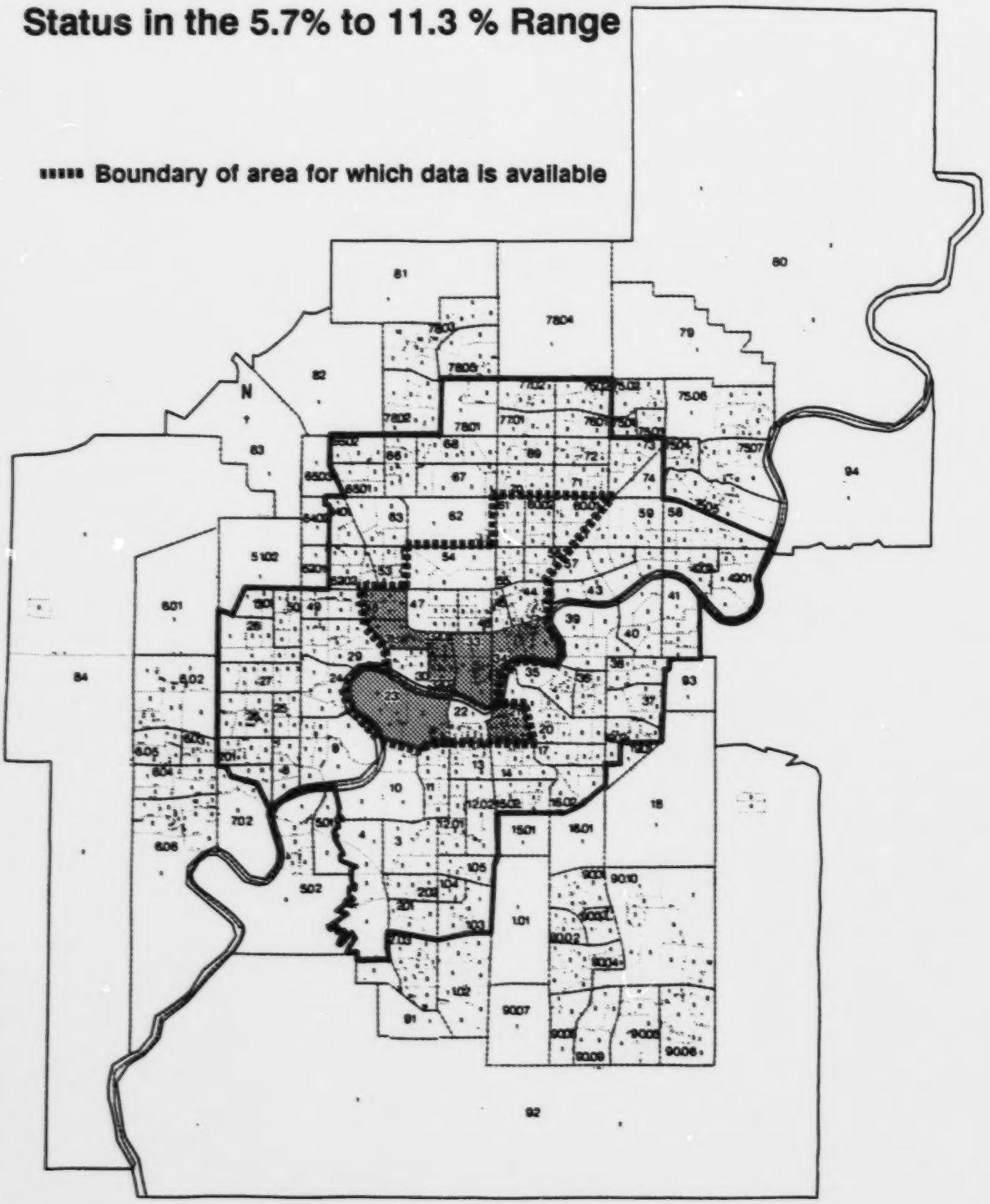
Inner City Census Tracts with at Least 5% of the Single Family Dwellings Renovated, 1981-1986



Source: Woodman, Elizabeth, "A Geographical Analysis of Housing Renovation in Edmonton's Older Neighbourhoods, 1971 - 1986", unpublished M.A. thesis in progress, Department of Geography, University of Alberta, 1989.

FIGURE 5

Inner City Census Tracts with an Increase in Social Status in the 5.7% to 11.3 % Range



Source: Ley, David, "Social Upgrading in Six Canadian Inner Cities", The Canadian Geographer, Volume 32, No. 1, 1988.

tracts selected. These census tracts included or were part of the neighbourhoods of Scona East, Westmount and the Rossdale/Downtown area.

In four of the seven census tracts, the increase in social status was in the more modest 5.7% to 9.2% range. These four census tracts include all or part of the neighbourhoods of Rossdale, Boyle Street, Riverdale, Garneau, Windsor Park, Oliver and Westmount.

As the results of the analysis indicate, several census tracts were selected for each of the five indicators. Using these findings, a census tract was determined to be a revitalizing area if it had been selected for three or more of the five indicators. The census tracts identified as revitalizing areas are described in Section 3.

3. The Nature of Inner City Revitalization in Edmonton

. In Which Neighbourhoods is Revitalization Occurring?

Revitalization is almost entirely concentrated in four adjacent census tracts located in the Oliver and Westmount neighbourhoods to the west of the downtown. Two isolated census tracts were also identified as revitalizing areas: one located northeast of the downtown in part of the McCauley neighbourhood, and one on the south side of the river in the Scona East neighbourhood. The census tracts identified as revitalizing areas are shown in Figure 6.

There is some variation in the number of indicators for which the census tracts were selected. None of the census tracts were selected for all five indicators, even though the data for all five indicators were available for 13 of the 84 census tracts. Two census tracts were selected for four of the five indicators and four census tracts were selected for three of the five indicators.[5]

The six census tracts selected as revitalizing areas are located in or comprise only four neighbourhoods: Oliver, McCauley, Scona East, and Westmount. The census tracts selected for four of the five indicators are roughly equivalent to the neighbourhoods of Scona East (tract 21) and east Oliver (tract 32.02). The census tracts selected for three of the five indicators correspond approximately to the neighbourhoods of McCauley (tract 44) and west Oliver (tracts 30 and 31).

. What Type of Revitalization is Occurring?

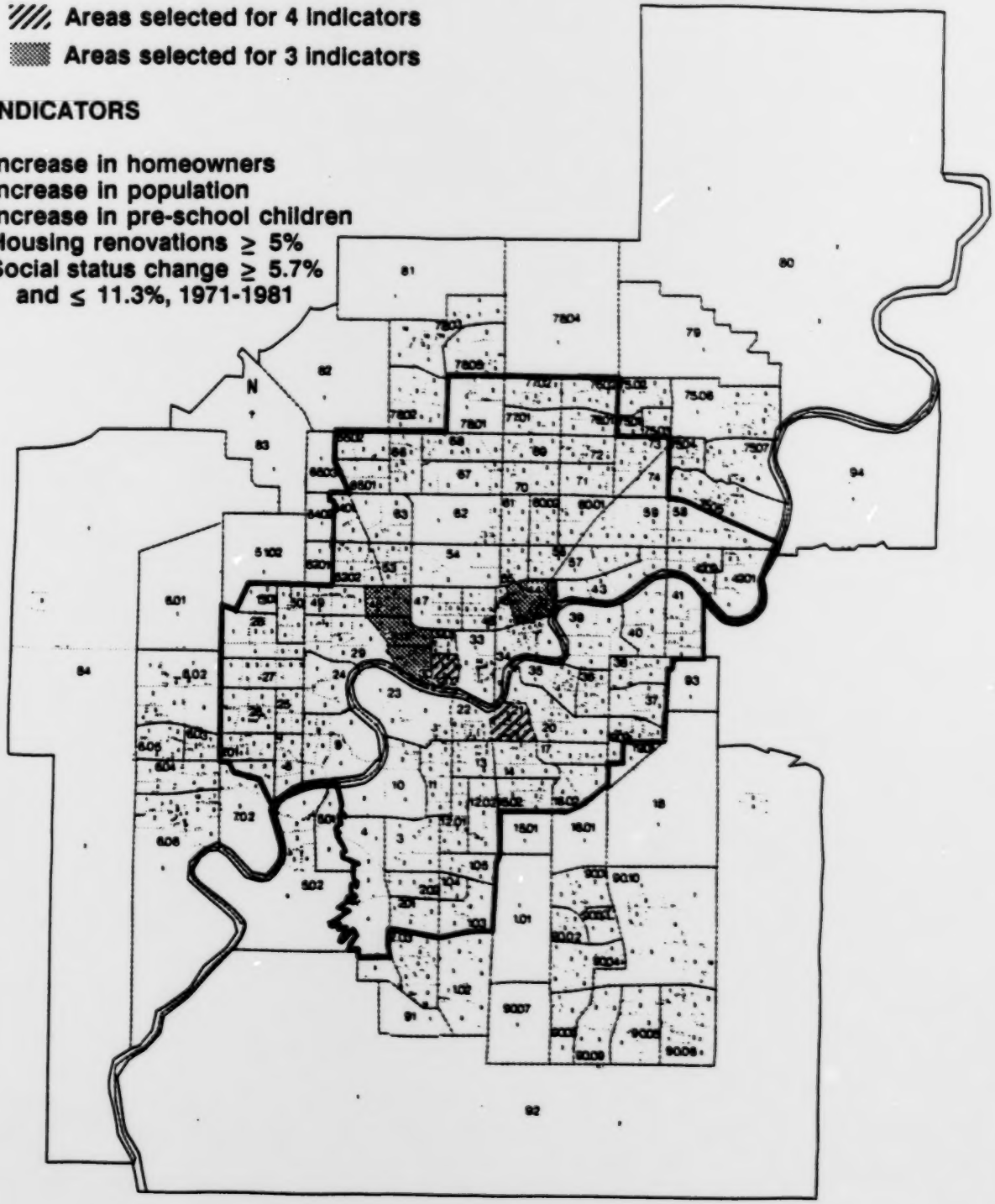
In each of these neighbourhoods, revitalization has had a different impact on the physical character of the area. Revitalization of older neighbourhoods takes one of two forms and is often a combination of both: (i) demolition and redevelopment; and, (ii) the renovation of the existing housing stock. Both redevelopment and renovation have occurred on a limited scale in the census tracts that have been identified as revitalizing areas. However, in most instances upgrading of the physical character of the neighbourhood has occurred primarily as a result of either renovation or redevelopment, not both.

In Oliver, revitalization has occurred through redevelopment in the form of high rise and walk-up apartments. This redevelopment in Oliver is a continuation of a trend that began in earnest in the early 1970's and which has subsequently resulted in the loss of the majority of the single family housing stock.

Redevelopment is the dominant form of revitalization in McCauley. Earlier studies examining inner city residential development have shown that the McCauley/Boyle Street area was an important location for new development from 1976 to 1983 (Inner City Residential Development Project Summary Report, 1984; City of Edmonton Inner City Residential Development, 1983, p.5). Data on housing renovations were not available for McCauley, but it is likely that housing renovations are occurring to some extent since

FIGURE 6

Revitalizing Areas in Edmonton's Inner City, 1981-1986



McCauley was one of the neighbourhoods designated under RRAP. However, given the generally poor quality of the housing stock in the McCauley neighbourhood, the scale of renovations is probably quite limited.

It is likely that housing renovation was the dominant form of revitalization in Westmount and Scona East during the time period under consideration. As indicated in Table 1 on the following page, several dwellings in Scona East (tract 21) and Westmount (tracts 31 and 48) were renovated in the five year period from 1981 to 1986. Redevelopment of these neighbourhoods probably occurred to a greater extent prior to 1981 (see City of Edmonton Inner City Residential Development, 1983; and Inner City Residential Development Project Summary Report, 1984 for a description of new construction by subdivision).

The two physical expressions of revitalization - redevelopment and housing renovation - may be associated with different socio-economic and demographic changes. The two neighbourhoods with the highest number of housing renovations, Scona East (tract 21) and Westmount (tracts 48 and 31) also had the highest gains in social status (see Table 1). Social status gains were much lower in the McCauley (tract 44) and Oliver (tracts 30 and 32.02) neighbourhoods where redevelopment is likely to have been the dominant form of revitalization.

In contrast, however, the highest gains in total population and in home ownership occurred in McCauley and Oliver. In the Scona East and Westmount areas where renovations were relatively high, total population declined, and only Scona East had a small increase in the number of home owners. Differences between the two types of revitalizing neighbourhoods can also be seen with respect to the changes in the number of pre-school children. The highest gains in the number of pre-school children occurred in the Westmount and Scona East neighbourhoods, the areas with the highest number of housing renovations.

In summary, the dominant types of social change observed in revitalizing neighbourhoods may differ according to the type of physical improvement that is occurring. In the revitalizing neighbourhoods identified in this study, increases in total population and home ownership occurred primarily in those neighbourhoods where redevelopment is occurring. In neighbourhoods where housing renovations were relatively higher, the highest increases in social status and pre-school children were observed.

. **What is the Extent of Inner City Revitalization?**

The extent to which revitalization is occurring in the four neighbourhoods is minimal, and has not dramatically altered either the physical or the social character of the neighbourhood. In most cases the increase in the indicators was not high, either in absolute or in percentage terms. Also, revitalization is likely to have been concentrated in a small part of the neighbourhood leaving most of the neighbourhood unchanged. Revitalization has not had much impact on the various social, economic, and physical issues facing these older neighbourhoods.

The types of issues requiring attention in these neighbourhoods can be illustrated with reference to the work conducted as part of the background study for the General Plan (see "Managing Urban Change in Edmonton", 1987). In this report, six indicators (unemployment; population loss; low income families; dwellings requiring repair; single parent families; and a high percentage of seniors) were used to identify areas of special need in the inner city. An area was identified as being in special need if all six indicators were significantly above (at least 25% higher than) the city average.

If the six special needs indicators are applied to the revitalizing areas identified in this report, it becomes apparent that inner city revitalization is occurring in neighbourhoods with a variety of issues requiring civic attention. This is particularly true in the McCauley (census tract 44) and southern Westmount (census tract 31) areas where four of the six special needs indicators are significantly above the city average. In northern Westmount (census tract 48) three indicators were significantly above the city average, and in the remaining areas, Oliver (census tracts 30 and 32.02) and Scona East (census tract 21), one indicator was significantly above the city average. Clearly, revitalizing neighbourhoods in Edmonton's inner city are areas of great contrast. Physical and social upgrading is occurring in neighbourhoods where a variety of issues such as unemployment, population loss and the physical deterioration of the housing stock continue to pose a threat to community viability.

TABLE 1: VALUES OF INDICATORS FOR CENSUS TRACTS SELECTED AS REVITALIZING AREAS, 1981 - 1986

CENSUS TRACT	CHANGE IN NUMBER OF HOMEOWNERS(1)	CHANGE IN TOTAL POPULATION(2)	CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN(3)	PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN SOCIAL STATUS (1971-1981)(4)	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS RENOVATED(5)
21	10 (10.0)*	-217 (- 3.5)	25 (9.8)	10.0 - 11.3	46 (5.0)
30	145 (47.5)	394 (8.8)	10 (15.4)	1.6 - 3.9	1 (1.8)
31	---	-370 (- 7.0)	50 (25.0)	5.7 - 9.2	35 (7.9)
32.02	45 (10.7)	743 (18.6)	5 (9.1)	5.7 - 9.2	---
44	30 (7.0)	173 (2.8)	15 (3.5)	1.6 - 3.9	N/A
48	---	-274 (- 7.3)	50 (25.0)	10.0 - 11.3	46 (5.3)

*Percentage given in brackets.

Sources:

(1), (2), (3) Statistics Canada, 1981, 1986 Census
(4) Ley (1988)
(5) Smith and Woodman (1989)

4. Implications for Action

An analysis of Edmonton's inner city was conducted using five indicators: population change, home ownership, pre-school children; social status change, and housing renovations. The purpose of the analysis was to answer three questions:

(1) To what extent is inner city revitalization occurring?

(2) In which neighbourhoods is revitalization occurring?

(3) What do the findings of the analysis suggest about the type of planning approach likely to be most effective in facilitating the revitalization of Edmonton's inner city?

Within the context of this study the first two questions have been answered. The third question arises from the focus of the draft General Municipal Plan (June, 1988). Inner city revitalization is a major component of the growth strategy of the draft GMP and, since one of the objectives of the plan is to "renew, maintain, or revitalize, as appropriate, the inner city communities", it is important to consider how this objective might best be achieved. Therefore, it is useful to consider question (3) in detail.

Planning Approach

The findings of the study suggest several courses of action relating both to further information requirements and to the development of effective plans for the revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods. These are as follows.

(1) An in-depth examination of the four revitalizing neighbourhoods is desirable in order to determine what conditions are likely to encourage neighbourhood revitalization. The limited extent of neighbourhood revitalization in Edmonton suggests that certain neighbourhood conditions and/or particular civic policies or programs are more conducive to revitalization than others. Discovering what these conditions are will help to determine the type of planning approach to adopt in various inner city neighbourhoods.

(2) Complete data on housing renovations and social status change is required before firm conclusions can be reached with respect to the location, extent, and characteristics of inner city revitalization. This would be especially useful for the oldest neighbourhoods since revitalization is not likely to be an issue for many of the younger inner city neighbourhoods. Also, since redevelopment and infilling are important aspects of revitalization, it would be useful to examine data on new construction in the inner city.

(3) The development of effective policies to encourage the revitalization of Edmonton's older neighbourhoods will have to recognize the unique features of each neighbourhood. As the results of the analysis indicate, revitalization takes different forms and has occurred in

relatively 'healthy' neighbourhoods such as Scona East as well as in neighbourhoods such as McCauley in which a variety of socio-economic and environmental problems are severe. In the latter case, revitalization may not be in the best interests of the long-time residents of the community and those proposing change must be sensitive to the potentially disruptive effects of revitalization. The approach to revitalization must be area based, taking into consideration the unique socio-economic features of the neighbourhood - its particular mix of land uses, the condition and quality of the housing stock, accessibility to major employment areas, proximity to environmental and cultural amenities, and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population.

An Important Qualification

The time period for analysis in this report generally covers the period 1981 to 1986. However, this period was characterized by considerable economic volatility as the Edmonton economy went from high growth in 1981 to a recession in 1982/1983, a modest recovery and then another period of economic decline in 1986 as oil prices fell. Important features which likely affected revitalization included very high interest rates, declining house prices, population out-migration, the collapse of housing starts after 1984 and high unemployment.

The combination of economic events over 1981 to 1986 suggests this was a tumultuous period to expect inner city revitalization. As the Edmonton economy in the late 1980's and early 1990's moves to expected moderate growth, the economic conditions may become more favourable for revitalization.

NOTES

1. Several other indicators such as new construction, new businesses, median income and university education could have been used in the analysis. These indicators, particularly new construction, would have been useful in identifying the types of changes occurring in revitalizing neighbourhoods. However, the data for these additional indicators are not available at this time.

2. School Age Children was originally included in the analysis, but was dropped because the number of school age children increased in only one census tract.

3. Structural value is a technical term that refers to an estimate of the replacement cost of a dwelling or dwelling renovations as determined from the Alberta Assessment Manual used by City of Edmonton assessors.

   The structural value provides a measure of the value of renovations (adjusted to a common base year) that can be used to indicate the magnitude of dwelling renovations. However, the structural value of renovations is not equivalent to the actual cost of the renovations and may underestimate the actual cost of renovations considerably.

4. Since data for the five indicators are not readily available at a neighbourhood scale, the census tract is used as the unit of analysis in this report. However, since the purpose of the report is the identification of revitalizing neighbourhoods, frequent reference to the neighbourhoods associated with various census tracts is made throughout the report. Unfortunately, in most cases, census tract boundaries do not correspond to neighbourhood boundaries so a certain degree of confusion may arise from the attempt to assign neighbourhood names to census tracts.

5. Census tracts 1.05 in South Edmonton and 77.02 and 76.02 in North Edmonton were also selected for three of the five indicators but these census tracts cannot be considered as revitalizing neighbourhoods. The identification of these relatively young census tracts is attributable to new development that is occurring on previously vacant land. This new development has contributed to increases in population, home ownership, and pre-school children. Revitalization is a term that is more appropriately used to refer to older established neighbourhoods where social or physical upgrading is occurring.

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